

SPARHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 10th May 2022 in the Old School Room.

The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Pryke, with three members of the public, all parish councillors, and the Clerk, in attendance.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, there were no apologies received.

2. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 25th May 2021.

The minutes of the meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman reported that the previous year had been quiet although things were now returning to normal after Covid. Members of the Council had attended the recent Police SNAP meeting to reinforce the current speeding issue, which has been actioned by the Police with camera traps and other plans in place to collect speeding data. Parish funds are slowly increasing with the objective being to repair the wall at the Village Green and improving other facilities in the village where possible.

4. Reports from District & County Councillors.

The reports from the District and County Councillors are attached.

5. Old School Room Report.

The Chairman reported that the Old School Room Committee had been re-elected with no change to membership. Bookings are on the increase, following Covid, with some regular bookings. Hall charges are kept as low as practicable. The Breckland grants helped with the toilet refurbishments and four new gazebos have been purchased. The Committee are looking to replace the chairs in the near future. The Hall has a healthy bank balance with £4,200 at year end.

A ramble was held on Sunday, albeit with low attendance, and a Jubilee event is planned in June, with the cinema nights recommencing soon.

6. Village Green – Wildflower Project

Cllr McConnell reported that an area had been recently rotovated and wildflower seeds sown, which were now coming through although there is one area which had been scorched but it was hoped that this will be remedied by the impending rain forecast. There remains a

further £120 available from the grant and it was planned to buy more seeds to extend the wildflower area around the oak tree. Primroses will also be planted in appropriate places.

Further grants will be available in the autumn for free trees and it was hoped to obtain some fruit trees for the Green and other appropriate spots in the village.

The Chairman thanked Cllr McConnell for her hard work on this project.

7. Open Forum – an opportunity for residents to express their views on matters of interest or concern relating to the village and to suggest ideas for the future.

Disappointingly, there were no members of the public present.

8. To note the date of the next Annual Parish Meeting - Tuesday 9th May 2022.
(subject to change due to Council elections)

The date of the next meeting was noted and the Chairman closed the meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Signed:

Date:

Report from Cllr Bill Borrett and Cllr Gordon Bambridge Breckland Council highlights 2021/22

Introduction

Welcome to our report on Breckland's year which has been a very busy one. Breckland's Corporate Plan brings together its strategic priorities for the coming years and outlines what we'll do to make a difference in Breckland to ensure it is a place where people and businesses can thrive. This report outlines some of the projects Breckland has delivered in 2021-22 against our overarching commitments and priorities as Members.

These priorities are grouped across four key themes:

- **Inspiring Communities**

We want Breckland to build on the many strengths of its local communities so that people can lead happy, healthy, fulfilling lives here. Working collaboratively with our partners, as part of a community-led approach, we want to work to address vulnerability in Breckland. Covid-19 has left a lasting effect on our communities, and we are committed to supporting our residents and businesses to recover from the pandemic and support them in adjusting to life with covid in the longer term.

- **Thriving Places**

Each of the five town centres are different. Breckland will enable strategic and focused action within each of them and their hinterlands (which includes the Upper Wensum Ward) working with key stakeholders and partners to drive investment and change that will help the towns thrive now and in the future.

- **Breckland 2035**

We want Breckland to lead by example as an organisation taking action to reduce its own impact and achieving net zero emissions by 2035. We recognise that it cannot achieve this alone. Therefore, we want to use its resources and regulatory powers to create an environment in which our residents and other key stakeholders are enabled to act for themselves in contributing to this agenda.

- **Working Smarter**

As a performance-led organisation, we want it to evolve its approach to delivering services to become a modern organisation which is set up to best meet the changing needs of its residents. Adopting an agile working approach will enable it to break down the barriers of site-specific working and empower officers to work with members to work at the location and time that meets business demand and best supports the delivery of high-quality services.

Finally, we are excited to share the **Breckland Cares** programme for the first time, which is made up of seven campaigns delivered over a rolling 12-month programme. The campaign will shine a light on several passions of ours, including mental health, diversity and inclusion, and climate change.

Please see below a more detailed description of the four areas together with a set of graphics that summarise them at the very end.

Best wishes

Bill and Gordon

Inspiring Communities

Breckland Council will help our residents to live safe and healthy lives by playing an active part in local communities. We will do this by providing and enabling excellent services that understand and support the needs of our residents and local areas, enhancing the quality of life for all.

What we've delivered in 2021/22:

- Invested £1.8m in the creation of a brand-new **temporary accommodation facility in Thetford** (Elm House) to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. And have now begun work in partnership with Broadland Housing to provide five new units of 'move-on' accommodation, with intensive support, for people who have been sleeping rough.
- Commissioned by Mid-Norfolk Primary Care Network to deliver **social prescribing services**, helping over 300 residents through holistic support to improve their health and wellbeing.
- 30 community groups are now able to offer enhanced services to their communities through the **Inspiring Communities match funding scheme**, leveraging in over £250,000 to the district.
- Introduced **Breckland Mobile Food Store**, launching in April 2022, providing subsidised food to those most in need, with additional support mechanisms in place to address wider wellbeing issues such as social isolation and loneliness
- Created the **Early Intervention Fund** to provide financial support to individuals in extreme financial hardship to prevent them reaching crisis point.
- Boosted our **mental health** offer by **training 100 mental health champions** as part of our Mental Health Community Partnership scheme and continue to arrange and deliver mental health training across the district with partners including MIND, YANA and NSFT.
- Worked with partners such as the **Daisy** project to support survivors of **domestic abuse** and sexual violence and to help raise awareness.
- Developed a new and exciting partnership with Creative Arts East to transform the delivery of our popular **Silver Social programme**, extending the offer in local communities
- Established a Grants and Adaptations Team to work with residents who require **adaptations** to enable them to stay in their own homes. So far, they have delivered 24 projects with a further 246 ongoing.
- Continued to offer residents a high level of service from the **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)** team who received praise for their work with one resident who suffers from Motor Neurone Disease. This resulted in the team's work being praised on BBC breakfast.
- Supported **Breckland Youth Advisory Board (YAB)**, to deliver **mental health support** to Breckland families with young people aged 11 to 18 who are awaiting treatment or at risk or not attending school due to their mental health through the Cup-O-T Service.
- Played a key role in **responding to the pandemic**, including recruiting a team of Covid Support Officers to engage with businesses and members of the public to ensure compliance with national guidance and offer advice. Also engaging with partners to set up and operate district **asymptomatic testing** (walk in lateral flow tests), supported vaccination centres, promoted vaccination availability, engaged with major employers to manage **infection control** risks and **investigated Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)** to ensure that there was no threat to public safety.

- Continued our **crackdown on littering, fly tipping, and abandoned cars**, raising awareness of our no-tolerance approach and resulting in a significant number of fixed penalty notices being issued to deter others from offending in the future

Thriving Places

Breckland Council will play an active role in creating the right conditions for new and existing local businesses to thrive. We will continue to support growth in the local economy, bringing forward and shaping large-scale projects and activities, which will unlock significant employment and housing opportunities.

What we've delivered in 2021/22:

- Began construction work of a new **£3.5m electricity substation in Snetterton**, which will enable businesses to grow at Snetterton Heath, protecting and creating jobs in the district
- Supported Homes England to hold public engagement events on the **Attleborough SUE**, with a design code, structure plan, and strategies now being developed to deliver quality housing
- Transformed old waste ground in Dereham into a beautiful new community space called **Ellenor Fenn Garden**.
- Improved the local area by overseeing the purchase and removal of an unsightly **boat from Thetford river**, a move supported by local businesses and communities.
- Determined 89% of minor or major **planning applications** within our specified timescales.
- Increased the housing stock for local residents with **two new housing developments** in Attleborough and Mileham.
- Engaged with over 20,000 residents as part of the **Future Breckland** project, to identify significant projects that can be delivered for our five market towns to help them bounce back from the challenges of covid-19 and build a strong and sustainable economy for the future.
- Supported over 300 local businesses to achieve **covid Safe Scheme accreditation**. The scheme recognises businesses in the district which have put measures in place to help protect their staff and customers from coronavirus and provide reassurance to local residents and visitors that they can shop safely.
- Supported 45 enterprises through the **Breckland Business Start-up Scheme**, helping them with funding and support to set up and begin a business because of covid.
- Created an innovative **Spring Back Programme** which has supported over 1360 businesses and provided over £4.5m of investment into the most vulnerable and in need areas of the economy.
- Applied for round one of the **Levelling up Fund** - a highly commended bid was made for £17m of investment in Phase 1. No issues were identified by Civil Servants in their analysis, and its strong logic and excellent value for money (Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) were commended.
- Worked with the council's leisure provider to help **leisure centres recover** post-covid lockdowns and enable ongoing services for the wellbeing of local residents.
- Better equipped businesses to reach customers that are declining in numbers on the high streets and across the district by improving their digital platforms through the **Digital Breckland Fund**.
- Launched a new **Commercial Waste Service** and have already launched over 200 bins, providing a flexible, cost-effective service whilst also generating an income.

- Invested in our resources for animal licensing, with Breckland taking a lead role on investigating welfare standards, tackling 'puppy farms' etc.
- Supported our commercial tenants through difficult times during covid with **rent deferrals and lease variations**

Breckland 2035

Breckland Council has recognised that there is a climate emergency that needs our urgent attention. As a result we have created our 'Breckland 2035' Sustainability Strategy, which sets out the direction of how we play an active role in mitigating its impact.

What we've delivered in 2021/22:

- Launched our **Sustainability Strategy** setting out how we will work with residents, businesses and partners to effect positive behavioural change that will lead to Breckland becoming a sustainable rural district in the country.
- Grown our **garden waste service**, which now covers nearly 25,000 residents.
- To keep our streets safe and save energy costs, we have supported the replacement of 133 streetlights within the district with more energy efficient **LED bulbs**.
- Released around £100k through our **Community Green Grants** scheme. The fund was set up to support communities in Breckland to take action for themselves and promote environmental sustainability, create behavioural change in response to climate change, and encourage communities to take positive action. Some of the projects funded include:
 - Croxton Parish Council to install EV charging points at their site
 - Purchase of battery storage for solar power at a village hall
 - Charles Burrell Centre replace lights with LED to reduce impact and cost
 - A water management scheme in Blo Norton, including a pond and reed bed filtration system
 - Several schools to create wildlife gardens and/or allotments
 - A variety of organisations including parish councils, community groups to install bat and bird boxes.
 - The community trust at Elm House (our new temporary accommodation facility) enabled to **create vegetable gardens** to help residents at sites to grow their own food
 - Harris Hardware in Dereham to carry out a **re-use and repair scheme** for residents
 - Kickstart Norfolk to buy **five electric mopeds** to provide young people with transport
- Worked with the leisure centre provider to **install environmentally-friendly measures**, such as LED lighting and pool covers to retain heat. These are due to installation imminently.
- Developed plans to **plant hundreds of trees** in the district as part of our commitment to protect and enhance the Breckland environment, as well as support the national green canopy initiative for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Working Smarter

We put our residents and businesses at the heart of everything we do. Prior to the pandemic, Breckland Council committed to a significant transformation programme to change the way its members and officers undertake their respective roles. The outcome will allow us to continually improve the delivery of services, make better use of space and resources, and future-proof the organisation - enabling us to operate as a modern council. Ultimately, this will make the organisation more efficient and effective while continuing to operate within our established budget.

What we've delivered in 2021/22:

- Worked in partnership with councils in north and west Norfolk to deliver a **new waste and recycling collection service**, along with street cleansing and grounds maintenance.
- Launched an **online chatbot** to allow residents a fully automated and 24- hour way of interacting with the Council and its services. The impact of this is already being seen with 80% of our live chat interactions now being automated allowing us to focus on calls.
- Successfully delivered and implemented the **Agile Working Policy** - fundamentally changing the council's approach to how and where we work.
- Continued to increase **mental health awareness** and support within the organisation through awareness sessions for managers and increasing the number of mental health first aiders within the organisation.
- Made our **website more accessible** than ever and are now ranked 14th out of 406 local authorities and public bodies in terms of accessibility. We are ensuring there are no barriers that prevent interaction with us due to a disability, bandwidth or speed.
- Added more **digital forms** to our website to make it easier and more efficient to contact us. We've received around 35,000 completed forms in the past 12 months.
- **Reviewed our Customer, Housing, Communities, Finance, Human Resources and Environmental Health teams** to ensure that they can offer the best possible service to residents within the district.
- Re-written our **Recruitment Policy** to include the Armed Forces Covenant and to make us a better disability employer. This is so we continue to be a diverse hiring organisation and that can attract all candidates.
- Re-established governance procedures to operate as a single council after **ending our partnership with South Holland District Council**, including establishing practices needed to ensure that the council could continue to operate democratically as a single organisation.
- Expanded our **Contracts and Procurement Team** and now offer expert procurement and contract support to a total of five Councils within Norfolk and Lincolnshire.
- Successfully held the district's **first major election** since the start of the pandemic, which saw the adoption of new health and safety measures whilst also continuing to deliver a fair and transparent election for residents across the district.

TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES WE HAVE...

Inspiring communities

TO HELP OUR DISTRICT THRIVE WE HAVE...

Thriving Places

Trained 100 mental health champions as part of our mental health community partnership scheme



Worked with Daisy project to support survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence



Begun construction on a £3.5 million electricity substation to enable growth at Snetterton



Supported over 300 local businesses through our COVID Safe Grant Scheme and our Digital Breckland Schemes



Developed Breckland Mobile Food Store to address food poverty in rural areas



Delivered a new £1.8 million accommodation facility in Thetford for those at risk of homelessness



Supported 1,360 businesses with £4.5 million investment through our Spring Back programme



Continued to invest £150,000 per annum to increase vibrancy in our towns



Over 250 residents have benefited from our multi-agency approach to early intervention



Delivered 24 grants and adaptation projects to allow residents to stay in their homes, with 250 more projects ongoing



Engaged with over 20,000 individuals as part of Future Breckland to help shape our District



Launched our new commercial waste service and have issued over 200 bins already



Secured funding and started delivery of 5 new "move on" accommodation units



Successfully ran the first social supermarket in the East of England



Acquired an asset in a strategic location to allow for potential regeneration on Thetfords riverside



Supported 45 enterprises through the Breckland Business start-up programme



TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT WE HAVE...

Breckland
2035

TO WORK SMARTER WE HAVE...

Working
Smarter

Launched our Sustainability Strategy to protect the future of our District



Expanded our garden waste service to over 24,000 households



Created a Contracts & Procurement Team to support five Councils in Norfolk and Lincolnshire and deliver value for money



Launched our online chatbot so customers can interact with us 24/7



Delivered £100k funding through community green grants



We have continued our £800k street light upgrade and have replaced a further 133 further with more efficient bulbs

Held the first major elections since the start of the pandemic, in a COVID safe and transparent way.



Rewritten our recruitment policy to reconfirm our commitment to the armed forces and people with disabilities as an inclusive employer



Led the county in enforcement action to tackle fly tipping and environmental crime



Worked with our providers to install environmentally friendly resources at our leisure centre sites



Successfully launched our new Corporate Plan setting out our priorities for the next 4 years



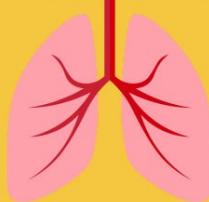
Fully embraced agile working in a post-covid environment and with a state of the art HQ



Transformed old waste ground into a new community space at Ellenor Fenn Garden



Flagship heritage action zone project in Swaffham to deal with historic environmental issues



Went live with a tri-district waste & recycling collection service



Ensured a balanced budget and supported frontline services whilst keeping Council Tax low



Report from Cllr Bill Borrett

County Council highlights for 2021/22

- 70% of Norfolk streetlights converted, or work underway to convert to LED
- 96.7% of highways inspections completed within timescale
- 99.6% of dangerous highway defects dealt with within timescales set out in the Transport Asset Management Plan
- 94% of Looked after Children (LAC) with an up-to-date Personal Education Plan
- Completed 51,000 Adult Social Care Assessments for 20,700 people.

The 2022/23 Budget

A **£464 million** net revenue budget, a **£25m increase** from last year, with increased spending across key service areas and capital programmes, along with a 2.99 per cent Council Tax rise has been agreed to enable Norfolk to build back better after the pandemic.

Adult Social Services will see an additional **£35.4m** of investment, against savings of £10.5m, **Children's Services** will receive **£23.2m** of further investment, with a **further £10m** this year for the **SEND School Programme**, with £12m against planned savings and **Community and Environmental Services** will see an additional **£11.2m**, against savings of £3.5m.

Within Community and Environmental Services there will be the **£10m pothole fund** to draw upon, **new recycling centres** across the County, **£5m on library upkeep** and extension of services and **£12m on the Better Broadband project**.

There has been substantial **Beryl Bikes and E-Scooters** uptake during the past year, with the average journey being over 3.5km (taking multiple car journeys out of the City) and multiple Local Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) plans being developed across the County (including Greater Norwich, King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Dereham).

Protecting Valued Services

Love Norfolk, Hate Litter – boost for pickers as litter can now be accepted at recycling centres

As the national Great British Spring Clean launched on 28th May 2021, there was good news for litter pickers as the county council announces that it was able to accept litter at any of Norfolk's recycling centres. From May, anyone who picked a small amount of litter in the county was (and is still able to) bring up to three bags of the waste to a recycling centre for disposal. People looking to organise a group litter pick are still urged to contact their district council who can help provide bags, grabbers and arrange for collection of the waste collected.

£29m 'pothole prevention' work underway across Norfolk

Pavements, cycleways and roads all benefited from the county's £29m maintenance programme taking place right across Norfolk this year.

The crucial upkeep work is a key part of the £42 million budget for roads and infrastructure that was agreed in February 2021.

This year £4.5m is being spent on maintaining pavements and paths, for example a £167,000 scheme to remove the existing worn and uneven pavement surface on Kennedy Avenue in Gorleston and replace it with a new smooth asphalt surface will be getting underway in late July.

Brand new £1.9m Norwich South recycling Centre opened

Norfolk's newest recycling centre opened to the public in December.

The £1.9m recycling centre is the sister site to the new Norwich North recycling centre that opened on 22nd September. Together the two sites will provide improved recycling facilities for the growing greater Norwich area.

As the new Norwich South recycling centre opens at Harford, just off the A47/A140 junction, staff bid farewell to the old site at Ketteringham that closed yesterday.

The move to a larger site allows room for a one-way traffic system to smooth traffic flow and reduce queues, low-level bins meaning people will not have to climb steps to recycle their waste, and there is plenty of parking for cars, bicycles and vehicles with trailers.

Fire and Rescue staff presented with awards

The achievements of staff across Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service have been recognised through employee awards.

A ceremony to present the awards was cancelled due to the pandemic, so senior leaders have visited some of the recipients of the 2021 awards individually and will continue to do so when Covid-19 restrictions allow.

As well as honouring staff with long service awards, categories also included fundraiser of the year, making a difference awards and leadership accolades.

The Council won a national award for its work with the Armed Forces

Norfolk County Council has been recognised for its outstanding support of the armed forces community in Norfolk, following an announcement from the Ministry of Defence.

The local authority has been given the Gold Award, the highest honour handed out through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The award is given to organisations that employ and support those who serve in the armed forces, service leavers, veterans and their families, with the Gold Award also acknowledging the Council's partnership working through the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board.

This includes successfully addressing a significant gap in the dental service provision in the West of the County. It negotiated with the Ministry of Defence and NHS England, to ensure the opening of a new dental practice for serving and civilian families at RAF Marham and the surrounding area.

Care Services

Plan to tackle Adult Social Care's winter pressures

Plans to support Adult Social Services with the “winter pressures” have been put in to practice.

A report was heard by Norfolk County Council’s Cabinet saying that Adult Social Services across the country are facing unprecedented challenges. However, here in Norfolk practical solutions are being put in place.

The report said: ‘Norfolk Adult Social Services face a level of unprecedented challenge in 2021/22 as a result of the pandemic, with national and local workforce shortages, rising demand in hospitals and the community and the continued infection risk posed by COVID-19 as well as other recurring respiratory viruses such as flu.’

Adult Social Services received 20,279 calls for support between April and October this year – an increase of 9,400 over four years.

Action being taken by the Council includes:

- Expanding action to support people at home or, where appropriate, in short term residential settings
- Stepping up the council’s care recruitment campaign, to tackle staff shortages
- Providing wrap-around support for care settings
- Providing assistive technology, with 100 video phones sent out to homes
- Improving capacity in the Norfolk First Response service
- Supporting mental health services, with three new step down services

Norfolk to take a step closer to new integrated approach to Health and Care

Norfolk County Council has agreed their support for new local Health and Wellbeing Partnerships, putting local communities at the heart of health and care in their area.

Under the Health and Care Bill, Integrated care systems (ICSs) are being established in all areas of the country to drive changes that are intended to lead to better, more joined-up care for the population.

Much of the activity to deliver integrated health and care and improve the population’s health will happen more locally in the places where people live and work, meaning the new Health and Wellbeing Partnerships will play a key role in driving forward this activity.

Strengthening Community Resilience

A new single point of contact for flooding in Norfolk has been launched, allowing residents to report any sort of flooding quickly and efficiently

In the event of flooding residents can call 0344 800 8013 to report it. Alternatively, residents can continue to report flooding online via the Council’s website. The new number gives residents a single point of contact and allows reports to be made swiftly.

Different agencies respond to different types of flooding, which has historically made reporting a flood by telephone more complicated when and where it is not possible to ascertain the source of floodwaters. The new number provides a single point of contact making the reporting of flooding quicker and easier.

Where there is a potential risk to life from flooding people should still call 999 immediately.

Flood Reserve Fund spending agreed

Norfolk's Cabinet considered the allocation of the council's £1.5m Flood Reserve Fund to support urgent works, repairs and to enable recommendations from flood investigation reports. The Reserve Fund was set up in the annual budget for 2021/22 agreed by the County Council in their budget meeting in February.

The Cabinet meeting, held on 6th September, discussed the proposed allocation of the funding, including £695k for additional highway and ditch maintenance and £365k for drainage asset improvements.

This funding will be used for work on the 285,864 metres of drainage grips and 31,037 metres of kerb drains on Norfolk's highways, as well as operations to clear some of the county's 145,305 gullies that help drain rain water.

Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance has formally adopted the Strategy

The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) has formally adopted an overall Strategy, designed to enable county wide responses to flooding across all agencies involved.

The Strategy, which lays out the NSFA's vision, objectives, approach and structure, is a major milestone in the development of the Alliance, which was founded earlier this year to bring together all agencies and partners involved in planning for and responding to flooding in Norfolk.

£1million awarded to community groups across Norfolk

Community and voluntary organisations across Norfolk were set for a major cash boost as the recipients of the **Norfolk Social Infrastructure Fund** were announced.

Norfolk County Council has handed out £1.02 million to 25 different organisations, with grants ranging £3,400 all the way up to £250,000.

In total, the fund saw 64 applications with funding requests that totalled almost £5million. This was more than double the number of applications received last year.

Economic Development

Ground-breaking partnership to provide Covid-19 recovery support for Norfolk

Norfolk County Council and New Anglia LEP were part of an ambitious cross-border project which helped to deliver a unique package of Covid-19 recovery support for local businesses and people.

The C-CARE (Covid Channel Area Response Exchange) initiative, funded by the Interreg France (Channel) England programme which has allocated €2.2m for C-CARE in Norfolk, was set to reach businesses and people that were been hit hardest in the pandemic.

Drawing on a range of expertise from local government, enterprise and tourism in the UK and France, the project supported people at risk of exclusion from the labour market and businesses at risk of closure.

C-CARE aims to reach 4,500 people and almost 2,000 businesses through its pilot initiatives which include skills training to help individuals find new routes into employment or starting a business, and advice and grants aimed at helping companies reset their business models in response to the pandemic.

In Norfolk the project will work to support over 600 people into employment or self-employment and provide support for up to 800 businesses.

Norfolk to get faster broadband thanks to new Government funding

Hard to reach premises in Norfolk are to receive between £115m and £195m of funding as part of the Government's Project Gigabit to provide 1GB per second broadband to up to 119,000 premises. Contracts will be awarded from February 2022.

Rural homes and businesses across Norfolk and Suffolk will get next-generation gigabit broadband brought to them under a £5 billion plan to level up internet access across the UK. It means families no longer having to battle over bandwidth and will give people in rural areas the freedom to live and work more flexibly, with the speed and reliability needed to start and run businesses.

Supporting families and young people

Vulnerable young people in Norfolk have chance to take “New Roads” with launch of dedicated support service

A new service to support some of Norfolk’s most vulnerable young people to live within families and achieve their full potential launched on 1st June 2021.

“New Roads” was set up by Norfolk County Council with significant investment to give young people access to a dedicated support team that sticks with them, understands them, and helps them to achieve and succeed.

Based out of two hubs, in Dereham and Norwich, the service provides young people with education, life coaching and speech and language therapy, as well as access to short term residential beds and foster care placements to help meet their needs.

The aim is to give young people stability, reduce risk-taking behaviour and help to avoid the need for long-term residential care, as well as longer term costs to themselves, the wider system and communities.

Free online business summer school for 16-25-year-olds in Norfolk

There are so many options to choose from when leaving school - like apprenticeships, university, work experience, getting a job...

Or how about starting a business? It may seem a daunting idea at first, but there's lots of free help on offer.

Started in August 2021, the Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Norfolk, managed by Norfolk County Council's Library and Information Service, ran a free online Summer School for 16-25-year-olds to help them decide whether starting their own business might be right for them.

Plans for thousands of new school places in Norfolk

More than a dozen new primary schools could be needed in Norfolk in the next decade, to cater for growing pupil numbers in areas of development.

A report to Norfolk County Council's Cabinet highlighted the scale of school development that is likely to be needed to support Norfolk's growing communities. It addresses both demographic changes and population growth from new housing. The report, discussed by members on 31st January, provided a snapshot of the council's plans to ensure there are sufficient school places for Norfolk children aged four to 16.

Alongside district councils, the County Council expects to secure nearly £100m in developer contributions for the proposed new and extended schools but if all of the places are needed, a further £191m would need to be found. Some of this will be met by Community Infrastructure Levy and government grant contributions.

Inspectors praise support for children in care in Norfolk

Most children in care in Norfolk are well looked after and receive good support for their emotional and mental health and education, Ofsted inspectors have found.

A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited Norfolk County Council in October for a two-day focused visit of the council's services for children in its care.

In a letter detailing their findings, inspectors said that social workers know their children well, listen to them and help them to understand their experiences.

Ofsted's visit follows a similar visit in 2019, which looked at how the council responds to child safeguarding calls and referrals. Following that visit, inspectors described the quality of decision making as "consistently strong".

Caring for our environment

Carbon cutting commitment central to new county transport plan

A plan set to drive the county's transport policy for the next 15 years was discussed by County Councillors in August. The ambitious Local Transport Plan has at its heart the aim to support a growing economy, strengthen communities and reduce our impact on the environment.

A carbon cutting commitment is central to the transport plan which supports the county council's pledge to achieve net zero carbon by 2030, which Councillors adopted as part of the authority's Environmental Policy in November 2019.

Buzz created as pollinator paradises set for Norfolk roadsides

Tripling the number of Roadside Nature Reserves in Norfolk were among a range of green measures considered by County Councillors last July.

Fewer cuts for rural roadsides, a pollinator action plan, and 188 more roadside nature reserves are all on the cards as part of plans to boost biodiversity along roads and paths across the county.

Also on the agenda were plans to help boost cycling and walking across the county, and development of a new verge management policy which will include information for parish and town councils wishing to take on responsibility for verge cutting in their local area. The aim is to help involve local communities more in decisions about verge management near them.

With my best wishes

Bill

BILL BORRETT

Member for the Elmham and Mattishall Division

Norfolk County Council